



Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake 2019

Located in Fluvanna County, Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake is a 50-acre impoundment owned and managed by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The lake contains self-sustaining populations of Largemouth Bass, Bluegill, Redear Sunfish, and Black Crappie. The lake has provided excellent Largemouth Bass and panfish fisheries since the Department began an annual fertilization program in 1970. The fertilizer enhances the bloom of phytoplankton in the lake, which provides important food for the production and growth of fish. The phytoplankton also gives the lake its greenish color in the spring and summer months. To provide additional angling opportunities, the reservoir is annually stocked with channel catfish. In 2018, the fish community of Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake was sampled by boat electrofishing and trapnets. This report summarizes the results of these surveys and what anglers can expect to catch in Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake.

A total of ten fish species were collected in the 2018 surveys (Table 1). Bluegill and Largemouth Bass were the most abundant species collected in the electrofishing survey while Black Crappie and Bluegill were the most abundant species collected in the trapnet survey (Table 1). Fluvanna-Ruritan continues to produce a quality bass fishery. The catch rate for Largemouth Bass was slightly low when compared to catch rates from previous surveys, but was still in the optimal range for a Central Virginia impoundment. The size distribution of bass collected was exceptional, with good numbers of fish collected up to 20 inches (Figure 1). Similar to previous surveys, catch rates for bass between 12 and 18 inches were astonishingly high, and anglers should experience great success catching these quality-sized fish. Numerous bass above 20 inches were collected (Figure 1), indicating a good potential for trophy-sized bass in Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake. The exception bass fishery was quantified during a 2016 Largemouth Bass density study when the lake was estimated to hold 398 bass 15 inches or larger (8/acre) and 80 bass 20 inches or larger (2/acre). The largest bass collected in the 2018 electrofishing survey measured 22 inches and weighed approximately 7 lbs. The good growth of young and middle-aged bass is imperative to trophy potential of bass. In Fluvanna-Ruritan, Largemouth Bass growth is fair and could be better; small bass (< 12 inches) were slightly skinny. Anglers should harvest bass from the small size classes (< 12 inches) to avoid stockpiling and stunting of the bass population. Anglers searching for bass should fish the numerous brushpiles, the main-lake points, or the deep shoreline up lake from the dam. In recent years, biologists have worked to increase the fishable

habitat in Fluvanna-Ruritan through the addition of marked fish attractors and fallen trees cabled to the bank.

Sunfish catch rates were slightly low with Bluegill comprising the majority of sunfish collected. The bulk of sunfish collected were in the 4 to 8 inch range, but a few fish above 9 inches were collected (Figure 2). Only a small number of Redear Sunfish were collected but the majority of redear collected were large sunfish (9+ inches). The fertilization program has shown the largest effect with the increase in the production and growth of sunfish throughout the lake. Anglers should easily catch their limit of harvestable-sized sunfish during a summer's day at Fluvanna-Ruritan. The best places to fish for sunfish are around the numerous brushpiles around the lake and off the dam shoreline.

Catch rates for Black Crappie were good due to an abundance of fish in the 7 to 10-inch size range (Figure 3). The majority of these fish ranged in age between 2 and 6 years of age with a small number of crappie ($n = 5$) between age 7 and 9 collected. Due to an abundance of older fish, the fish appear to exhibit slightly stunted growth not reaching 9 inches on average until age 5 (Figure 4). For comparison, in the 2015 survey crappie were reaching 9 inches on average by age 3. Overall annual survival of crappie is estimated at 67% which appears low to keep growth up for crappie at Fluvanna-Ruritan. The crappie population has good numbers of adult (spawning-aged) fish with 91% of the fish collected older than age 3 and anglers are encouraged to harvest these adult fish to increase individual growth rates. No White Crappie were collected from Fluvanna-Ruritan during the 2018 surveys. Crappie anglers should expect success for crappie in the 7 to 9-inch range in 2018 but limited success for any larger fish. Anglers looking to quickly fill their creel limit should fish crappie during the spring and fall around any structure (brushpile, beaver hut, attractors, and fallen trees).

A small number of Channel Catfish were collected in the 2018 surveys (Table 1); these fish ranged in size from 13 to 22 inches (average size 18 inches). Catfish often frequent deeper water making them more difficult to catch with electrofishing and trapnet gear, but channel catfish are being stocked annually, so anglers always have a good chance of catching one. During the 2018 sample, one large Blue Catfish was collected and there have been confirmed reports of catches of large blue catfish by anglers. Blue Catfish were not stocked by the agency and due to their large size, were likely illegally stocked by unauthorized individuals. These large fish can disrupt the balance of the fish community in a small lake like Fluvanna-Ruritan and anglers are encouraged to remove these fish from the lake if they are caught.

Anglers looking for a remote location to fish with excellent bass, crappie, and sunfish fisheries should visit Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake. The parking area, access road, and boat landing areas were renovated in early 2019 making the access more accommodating to boat anglers. There is ample parking, a concrete boat ramp, and an open areas to fish from the shoreline. Gas powered motors are prohibited, but a good trolling motor will get you to any area of the lake. The lake spillway has some erosion issues and is scheduled for major renovation in the next few years. Due to the erosion, the agency is keeping the lake level 3 to 4 feet low to keep the spillway from charging during minimal rain events. Please visit the Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake page on our website for any updates to the dam and spillway renovation project.

For more information on Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake, please contact:

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Table 1. Species account and catch rates for fish collected throughout Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake in 2018.

Species	Electrofishing				Trapnets		
	Number Collected	Catch Rate (fish/hour electrofishing)	Percentage of Catch		Number Collected	Catch Rate (fish/net night)	Percentage of Catch
Black Crappie	30	30	14		243	12	46.9
Blue Catfish	1	1	1		NONE COLLECTED		
Bluegill	114	114	52		152	8	29.3
Brown Bullhead	NONE COLLECTED				76	4	14.7
Channel Catfish	3	3	1		29	2	5.6
Grass Carp	3	3	1		NONE COLLECTED		
Largemouth Bass	65	65	29		1	1	0.2
Redear	2	2	1		13	1	2.5
Yellow Bullhead	NONE COLLECTED				1	1	0.6
Warmouth	1	1	1		3	1	0.2

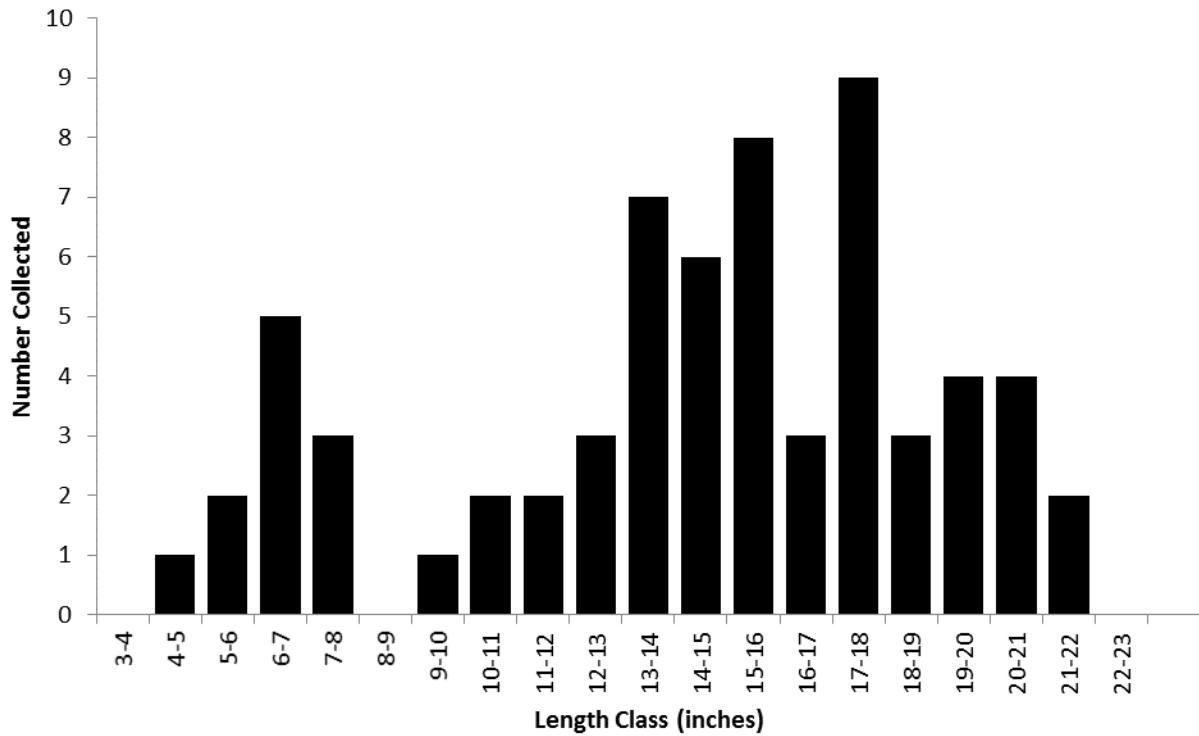


Figure 1. Length distribution of largemouth bass collected with electrofishing gear throughout Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake in 2018.

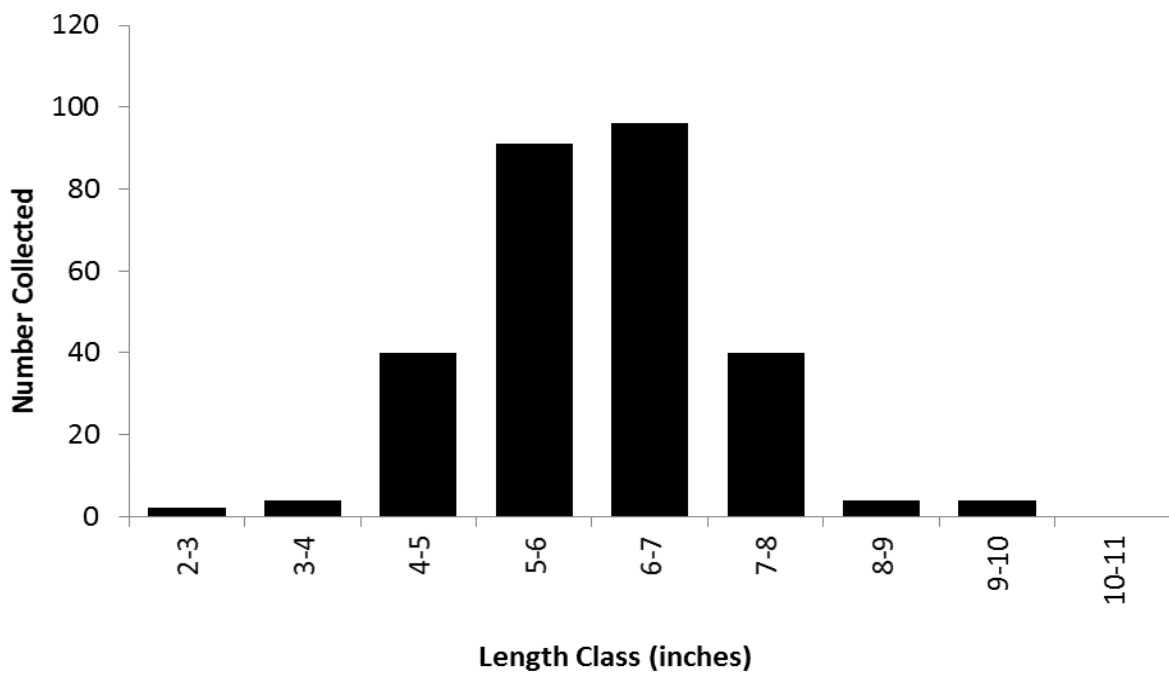


Figure 2. Length distribution of bluegill and redear collected with electrofishing and trapnet gears throughout Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake in 2018.

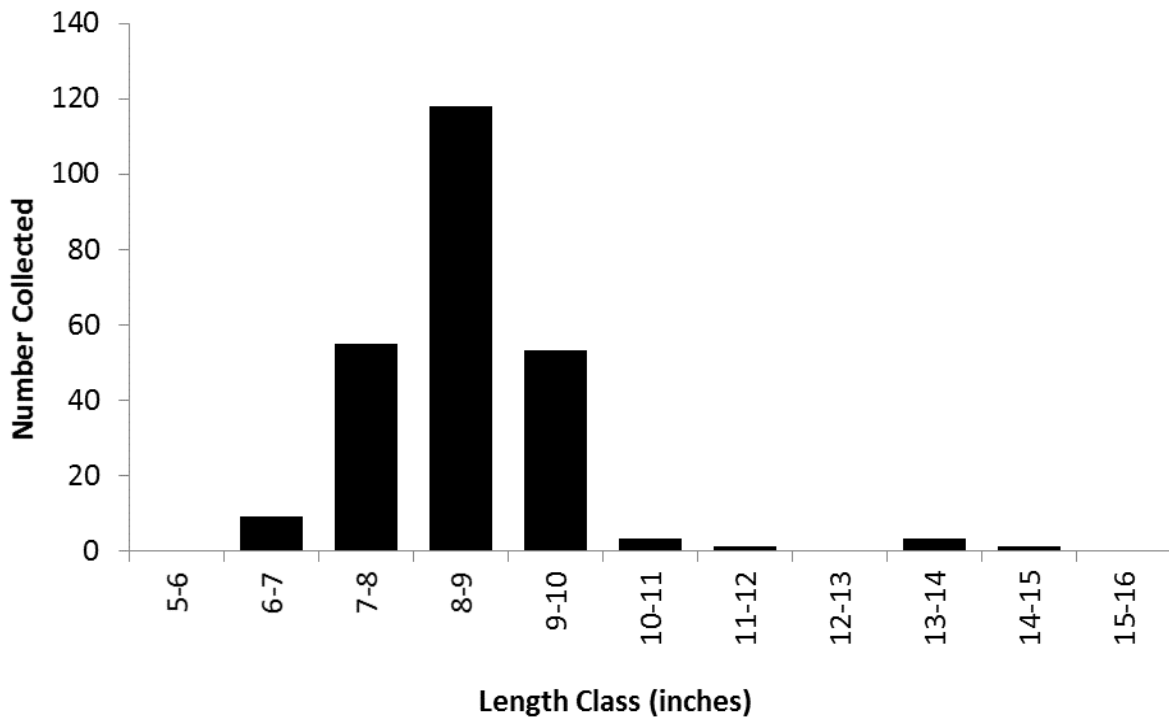


Figure 3. Length distribution of black crappie collected with trapnets throughout Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake in 2018.

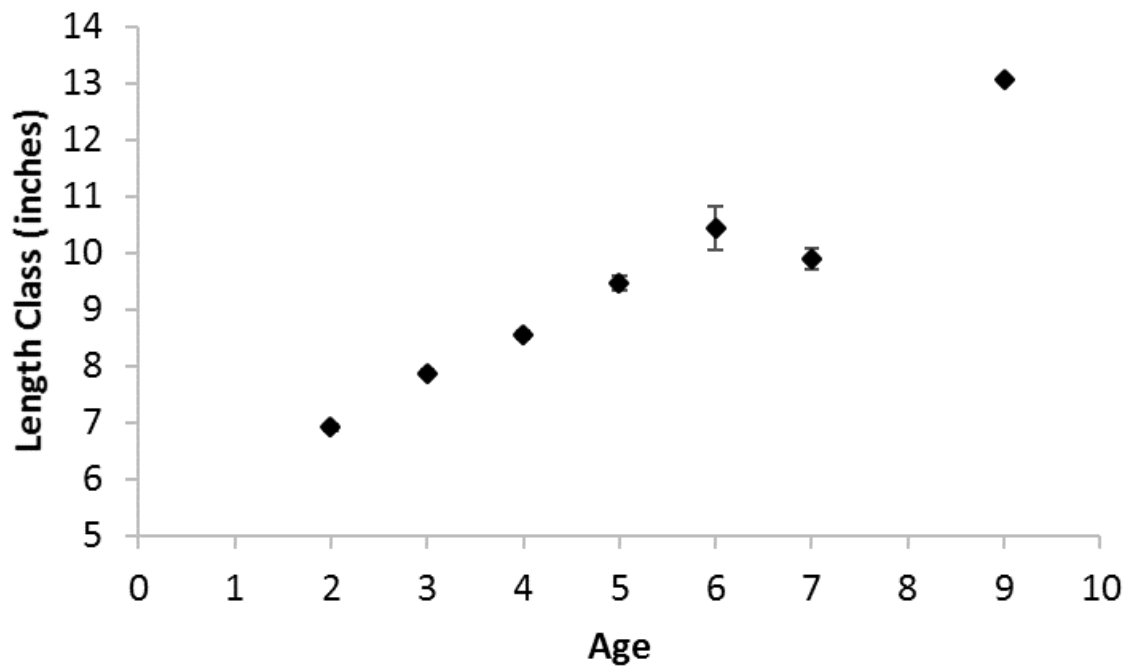


Figure 4. Average length-at-age of crappie collected with trapnets throughout Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake in 2018. Error bars indicate standard error.